



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# Researchers Study with the Aid of Dead Birds

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Scientists in the southwestern state of New Mexico are giving dead birds new life through unusual research.

A team at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology in Socorro is using dead birds that are prepared using taxidermy. Taxidermy is the art of preparing dead animals to look like they are still alive.

The team is turning the birds into drones in order to study flight. A drone is a small aircraft without a pilot.

Mostafa Hassanalian is an engineering professor who is leading the project. He has found that the machine birds have not produced the results he expected.

"We came up with this idea that we can use... dead birds and make them (into) a drone," he said. "Everything is there...we do **reverse** engineering."

The bird drones are still being tested at the university. The goal is to better understand how birds fly together in groups and how groups form. Hassanalian said the aviation industry could gain from the research.

"If we learn how these birds **manage**...energy between themselves, we can **apply** (that) into the future aviation industry to save more energy and save more fuel," he said.

Brenden Herkenhoff is a doctoral student at New Mexico Tech. He is researching flight efficiency, including how to limit the waste of energy.

Herkenhoff is studying how color affects flight efficiency.

"We've done experiments and **determined** that for our fixed-wing aircraft, applying **certain** color can change the flight efficiency. And the same is true for birds, we believe," he said.

Hassanalian said the taxidermy bird drone flies for up to only 20 minutes. He said the next step is to make it fly longer and to carry out tests in the wild with living birds.

I'm Gregory Stachel.

*Liliana Salgado reported this story for Reuters. Gregory Stachel adapted it for VOA Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**reverse** – *adj.* opposite to what is usual or stated

**apply** – *v.* to use (an idea, method, or law) in a particular situation

**manage** – *v.* to use (something) carefully and without waste

**determine** – *v.* to officially decide (something) especially because of evidence or facts

**certain** – *adj.* used to refer to something or someone that is not named specifically

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