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Move Over, Cult of Kitty; the Birds Also Have Highflying Fans

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Catharine Hamm, Los Angeles Times, November 2, 2011

Hello, Angry Birds.

Until recently, we thought Hello Kitty was the campiest highflying animal.

That was only because we didn't know about Angry Birds (and a tip of the hat to Ellen Creager of the Detroit Free Press for informing us).



Taiwanese airline EVA on Monday debuted a new generation of Hello Kitty aircraft, with A330-300 jets decorated using Sanrio's iconic Japanese feline. You can see the cat on the craft, of course, but according to an EVA news release issued before the debut flight, "At check-in, passengers on these aircraft receive Hello Kitty boarding passes and baggage stickers. Onboard, they discover Hello Kitty headrest covers, tissue, paper cups, utensils, milk bottles, snacks, hand-washing liquid, hand lotion, meals and ice cream. Flight attendants wear Hello Kitty aprons and have special insignias on their uniforms. And, at intervals, EVA will offer a series of limited-edition Hello Kitty duty-free products."

Taiwan News reported this week that "many of the passengers burst into radiant smiles when they got their Hello Kitty image-carrying boarding passes."

It's tempting to think of the cult of Kitty as one airline getting singularly brand (or branding) crazy, but there's a second (and earlier) example. Finnair decked out a four-engine A340 with Angry Birds for a flight that took wing in September.

Rovio, a (surprise!) Finnish company, is creator of Angry Birds, the wildly popular mobile digital puzzle game. Select passengers flew from Helsinki to Singapore on the Angry Birds jet, on which they played (what else?) in an Angry Birds tournament.

For those not yet addicted, Angry Birds players take aim at enemy pigs secured behind various barriers. Using an animated slingshot that launches different kinds of birds, players seek to destroy the pigs and advance through the levels. The game is said to have been downloaded, in various forms, 350 million times.

Here's what Finnair said in a news release: "This avian alliance is one example of Finnair's creative, fresh way of operating. Finnair is a significant player in traffic between Asia and Europe, and our goal is to double the number of Asian flights to 140 flights per week by 2020. It's great to be involved in bringing Finnish innovation to Asia."

No word yet on whether the Birds will fly.

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