



DWEA Briefing Paper: **Birds / Avian Mortality**

Summary

While human activity negatively affects many species of life on the planet in many ways, avian mortality from wind turbine's impact is minimal. Windows, automobiles, and house cats are each responsible for orders of magnitude more avian deaths than wind turbines. The long-term benefits of wind energy far outweigh the small impact of today's properly planned and sited distributed wind turbines on bird and bat populations.

It's a Good and Common Question

Due to the abundance of press coverage of bird and bat kills on utility-scale wind farms, many people new to wind power have concerns about distributed wind turbines and birds. Some are surprised to learn that the National Audubon Society actually supports wind development. As articulated on their web site, "...Audubon strongly supports wind power as a clean alternative energy source that reduces the threat of global warming."

When addressing avian and other environmental impact issues, it is important to make distinctions between utility-scale wind farms populated with many wind turbines and individually sited distributed wind systems or sites containing a handful of wind turbines. One early utility-scale wind farm, Altamont Pass in CA, was unfortunately constructed in avian migratory corridors resulting in serious avian impact issues. However, it is well documented that distributed wind has little or no avian or bat impact¹.

The Evidence Clears Distributed Wind

Tens of thousands of distributed wind turbines have been installed in the U.S. over the last 30 years, providing broad experience with turbines in a variety of environments. Such wind systems are installed in city, state and national parks, national wildlife refuges, conservation districts, back yards of bird watchers, ornithological study areas with daily monitoring, and in Audubon Society nature preserves. There is no evidence that these systems present a significant danger to birds or bats.

To the contrary, existing evidence exonerates distributed wind. The rigorous two-year scientific study by the Pennsylvania DCNR of a 10 kW turbine on a 120-foot tower at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center at Presque Isle State Park in Erie, PA resulted in only one grackle carcass in the vicinity of the turbine. The grackle had no external injuries, hence no evidence that the wind turbine was actually the cause of death. The DCNR report states, "Evidence from this study suggests that the probability of bird and bat mortalities being caused by collisions with small monopod wind turbines is low... At the TREC site a diversity of songbirds are using the area daily without turbine related casualties, and the same is apparent with bats that are active nightly during their seasonal occurrence."

¹ "A Study of the Potential Effects of a Small Wind Turbine on Bird and Bat Mortality at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, Erie, Pennsylvania," Dr. Kenneth W. Anderson, Gannon University, 12 December 2008.



Worry About Windows and Cats, Not Small Wind

Human structures and activities are far more hazardous to birds than wind turbines. According to Dr. Daniel Klem of Muhlenberg College, 100 – 900 million birds are killed each year in collisions with windows. The National Audubon Society estimates that 100 million bird deaths per year are attributable to house cats. Limiting distributed wind development based on concerns about avian impacts cannot be justified. This is true for all types of towers, including those with lattice structures and/or guy wires, in any color, and at any height. ***DWEA recommends that anyone asserting otherwise should be challenged to submit credible evidence to the contrary.*** Additionally, any small or community scale wind turbine providers claiming to have “bird friendly” technology are engaging in sales hype as there is no evidence that small and/or community wind turbines - of any configuration - pose a significant bird mortality risk.