

# Wind Power and Birds

*W. Mueller, N. Cutright, S. Diehl, K. Etter Hale, J. Trick*

## Facts and Research Findings on Wind Power and Birds

WBCI strongly advocates the use of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Interim Voluntary Guidelines to Avoid and Minimize Wildlife Impacts from Wind Turbines for site selection and construction of wind turbine installations. This document is available on-line at [USFWS Interim Guidelines](#).

The following general facts and guidelines about wind turbines and birds are supported by current research:

The wind turbines now being installed have much lower rates of avian mortality associated with them than those built 25 or more years ago. The "lattice" design of towers that wind turbines used then provided perches for raptors, which allowed (and even attracted, in some instances) many more birds to be in close proximity, which resulted in high mortality rates.

The wind turbine blade configuration and size, and reduced speed of new designs have also had the effect of lowering mortality rates.

No wind turbine design completely eliminates mortality of birds or other wildlife, including bats.

Determining the location of wind power installations may be the most important consideration in regard to limiting bird and bat mortality. Each proposed wind power installation should be scrutinized for its potential impact on nesting and migrating birds and other wildlife and native plant communities. Ideally, wind installations will be situated on already disturbed land (e.g. agricultural land) to minimize or eliminate the loss of habitat for wildlife.

Relative to other sources of mortality, wind power has a low impact in terms of avian mortality. See this web site for a comparison of varied sources and effects of mortality: [sibleyguides.com/mortality](#). Among these other sources, collisions with window glass and communications towers, pesticide-caused deaths, and predation by free-ranging and feral cats are all considerably more important sources of mortality for birds.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has no regulatory power in the siting of wind power installations. They can only suggest voluntary guidelines. When wind farm facilities are

100 megawatts or more, the Wisconsin Public Service Commission has preemptive authority over local government decision-making authority. Local governments (county or town boards) have this responsibility when installations are below this threshold. WDNR and USFWS may however become involved in cases where threatened or endangered species are affected, or in trying to ensure that adequate studies are done. At least one local hearing would be held in a decision process, and interested parties may wish to participate in these hearings to affect their outcome.

## Recommended Actions

Become involved in the discussion about wind power facilities proposed for your area. Participate in public hearings and ask questions about how the proposed facilities might impact birds and other wildlife. Communicate concerns you may have with your county and local governments, and the facilities' planners. If discussions with these parties are not constructive, notify the media and state bird conservation organizations and networks of your concerns. Contact the WDNR and USFWS if you have reason to believe that threatened or endangered birds are likely to be affected.

Evaluate your use of electricity around your home and workplace. Then modify your use of electricity to eliminate the waste and unnecessary use of this valuable resource.

Support the use of sustainable/renewable sources of electricity whenever and wherever they are found to be bird-safe and otherwise ecologically responsible.

## Additional Research Needs

Additional research is needed regarding alternate lighting sources, and the relative danger to birds posed by different wind power installation designs. Again, see American Bird Conservancy policy and guidelines at: [ABCbirds.org/policy/windpolicy](http://ABCbirds.org/policy/windpolicy).

## Links to Information Sources

Additional links to studies, data, and the positions taken by organizations include the following:

[American Bird Conservancy policy statement on wind power.](#)

[Wildlife management institute paper on windpower](#)

National Wind Coordinating Committee – Wildlife Interactions Research Meeting V: [Presentations, updates, habitat effects, bird migration, tools.](#)

Wind Turbine Interactions with Birds and Bats: summary and questions [NWCC Wildlife factsheet.pdf](#).

State of Kansas wind energy report: [Kansas Energy FinalReport](#).

New Jersey Audubon position paper on wind energy and its effects on wildlife: [NJ Audubon wind energy and wildlife](#).

Wind power and birds statement from Curry and Kerlinger (consultants on wind energy and effects on birds): [Curry & Kerlinger - wind energy and birds](#).

WEST, Inc. wind power and birds research and related information: [West Inc. wind power and birds](#).

Toronto Hydro Energy birds and wind power study: [Toronto Hydro Energy bird monitoring program January 2004](#).

Windfarms and Birds: BirdLife International study and report: [OffShoreBirdLifeStudy.pdf](#).

That wind power has value as an environmentally "benign" energy source is fairly well established. Here's a link to a discussion framing this topic, written by Mike Tidwell: [takoma.com ecopinion](#) Mike's message is obviously "pro-wind-power" in this piece, describing the relationship of bird mortality to the value of wind power is a main concern of this paper. Our purpose for offering it here is simply to present one point of view.

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### The authors:

**William Mueller** - WBCI Issues Committee Chair; WSO Conservation Chair

**Noel Cutright** - WBCI IBA Advisory Committee Chair; Senior Ecologist, We Energies

**Scott Diehl** - Manager, Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Wisconsin Humane Society

**Karen Etter Hale** - WBCI Chair; Executive Secretary, Madison Audubon

**Joel Trick** - WBCI Wetlands & Shorelines Subcommittee Chair, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service