

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Principles for Raptor Conservation

Wind power and raptors: their interactions and ways to reduce them

During their migrations, raptors often concentrate in large numbers along regionally and globally significant migration flyways. Many flyways are in wind-prone areas where migrants fly at low altitudes while slope soaring on updrafts. Wind turbines already occur at sites along many of these flyways and their construction has been proposed at other sites.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (HMS) recognizes the environmental benefits of wind power for addressing problems associated with climate change and environmental pollution.

HMS also recognizes its mission of protecting raptors, and that wind turbines sometimes negatively impact raptors, and that our understanding of these interactions is limited.

Specifically, HMS recognizes:

- that bird kills, including raptor kills, have been documented at wind turbines, and that the cause, or causes, of these kills is not well-understood, and that successful mitigation cannot be developed until this is better understood, and;
- that there is a lack of sufficient and relevant research on the effects of wind turbines on migratory raptors, and that such effects are likely to vary with topography, location, season, and weather, and;
- that, generally, it is not appropriate to extrapolate effects from one region to another, and that ecological baseline data should be determined on an individual, site-specific basis, and;
- that wind turbines have yet to occur at the scale and at many of the locations they have been proposed for, and that the effects of wind turbines on natural resources, including raptors, presently cannot be fully assessed or predicted.

Therefore, HMS calls upon its conservation partners and governmental and intergovernmental agencies:

- to expand the monitoring and assessment of impacts of existing wind turbines on migratory raptors, and;
- to identify areas where migratory raptors are vulnerable to wind turbines and where the design, placement, and use of wind turbines should be evaluated to protect migratory raptors, and;

- to help assess the cumulative impacts of wind turbines on migratory raptors along migration flyways, and;
- to call for comprehensive environmental assessments prior to the selection and permitting of specific sites for wind turbines that consider the potential for impacts to migratory raptors, and that include field and literature surveys to document the magnitude and species composition of raptor migration in the area, and;
- to adopt clear and transparent policies that articulate the permitting process for wind turbines, and that include necessary definitions of wind turbines and turbine activities, standards for site design and monitoring the effects, if any, on wildlife, and opportunities for public comment.

HMS also calls upon the wind-power industry:

- to follow the *Interim Guidelines* of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (or those of similar national agencies as appropriate) for avoiding and minimizing wildlife impacts from wind turbines during selection of wind turbine sites, and;
- to follow guidelines of the Wildlife-Wind Interaction Working Group of the United States National Wind Coordinating Committee (1999) for determining impacts of wind energy projects on birds and for monitoring long-term effects, and;
- to adopt the “precautionary principle” in the development of wind-turbine sites and to implement the best available methods for reducing and, if possible, eliminating raptor kills at wind turbines, and;
- to work with the conservation and ornithological communities to establish a research fund to study impacts of wind turbines on migratory raptors to develop ways to minimize negative impacts of wind power on birds, and;
- to take full account of the cumulative, as well as local, environmental impacts of wind turbines on migratory raptors when doing so.

Several conservation organizations have policy statements regarding wind power. One of the more comprehensive statements is that of the American Bird Conservancy (<http://www.abcbirds.org/policy/windenergy.htm>). We recommend that individuals and organizations concerned about wind power-bird interactions consult this policy statement and that the wind-power industry and relevant governmental and intergovernmental agencies adopt the recommendations indicated in this policy statement.

Finally, HMS invites relevant governmental and intergovernmental agencies and the private sector to cooperate with it and other conservation organizations in efforts to minimize the possible negative impacts of wind turbines on migratory raptors.

References:

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Hawk Mountain contact information:

Keith L. Bildstein, Ph. D.
Sarkis Acopian Director of Conservation Science
Acopian Center for Conservation Learning
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
410 Summer Valley Road
Orwigsburg, PA 17961 USA

Phone: 570 943 3411 ext. 108
Fax: 570 943 2284
Email: bildstein@hawkmtn.org