



**Presenting the facts  
about industrial wind power**

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## **Do wind turbines harm animals?**

Modern turbines have solid instead of latticed towers, so birds can't rest or nest on them. They can, however, still perch on the nacelle (the bus-sized generator housing at the top of the tower).

Modern turbines also turn at a much lower rpm than older models. Because the blades are so long, however, they're moving 150 to 200 mph at the tips, depending on the model, so the impact on birds remains substantial.

The fact is that few studies have been done to determine the true effect of industrial wind turbines on birds, and fewer studies still that have been done independently of the wind companies' control. The evidence is clear, though, that wind turbines present a threat to the lives of birds and especially bats.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service says that wind turbines should not be erected near wetlands, on mountain ridges, near shorelines, or in other known wildlife concentration areas or where fog or low clouds are common during spring and fall migrations.

Mountain ridges and coastal areas are typical migratory routes for many birds, and songbirds in particular fly low enough to be in danger of collision with the blades of large wind turbines. The clearing of forest attracts small mammals which in turn attracts hunting birds such as owls, hawks, and eagles to the vicinity of the turbines. The activities of prairie birds, including mating and nesting, are easily disturbed by the construction and continuing operation of a wind power facility, which can spread over thousands, of acres.

Promoters of industrial wind power try to justify these threats to birds and bats with the claim that they are actually saving even more birds by cleaning the air and reversing global warming. They are wrong in that belief, because wind power does not replace other sources of electricity.

They also try to divert attention by emphasizing the hazards posed by office tower windows, cars, and housecats, as if two wrongs make a right. And wind power is unique in its threat to raptors (hawks, eagles, falcons, owls, and vultures) — many of them already endangered — and other large birds such as ducks, geese, swans, and cranes.

The threat to bats has turned out to be a problem for the industry. FPL Energy ended access to its facilities after independent researches determined that thousands of bats were killed in just a couple of months at one location and that this mortality pattern was also being seen at other sites.

As with birds and bats, there are no reliable studies of the effect of industrial wind turbine facilities on other animals. The installing of such large structures in wild areas, along with supporting roads and transmission infrastructure and the clearing of trees on mountain ridges is bound to have a negative effect, if only because of the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of habitat, especially ecologically vital interior forest. The turbines also move (producing noise and vibration) and are lit by strobes day and night, adding to the distressing impact they likely have.

Until good studies are done, we have anecdotal evidence such as the following about the effect of a wind facility on Backbone Mountain, West Virginia: "I looked around me, to a place where months before had been prime country for deer, wild turkey, and black bear, to see positively no sign of any of the animals about at all. This alarmed me, so I scouted in the woods that afternoon. All afternoon, I found no sign, sight, or peek of any animal about."