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Save the Eagles International



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SEO/Birdlife issues warning

Spanish wind farms kill 6 to 18 million birds & bats a year

On 12 January 2012, at the First Scientific Congress on Wind Energy and Wildlife Conservation in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain, the Spanish Society of Ornithology (SEO/Birdlife) made public its estimate that, yearly, Spain's 18,000 wind turbines may be killing 6 to 18 million birds and bats (1). The average per turbine comes down to 333 – 1,000 deaths annually, which is a far cry from the 2 – 4 birds claimed by the American wind industry, or the 400,000 birds a year estimated by the American Bird Conservancy for the whole United States, which has about twice as many turbines as Spain.

Bats are included in the Birdlife estimate, comments Mark Duchamp, president of Save the Eagles International (STED). "Therefore, supposing for example that wind farms would kill twice as many bats as they do birds, the figures would be: 111 - 333 birds per turbine per year, and 222 – 666 bats per turbine/year. The mortality figures that were recorded in Germany and Sweden in the early nineties are not unusual after all", he notes. Quoting from a California Energy Commission study: "**In a summary of avian impacts at wind turbines by Benner et al. (1993) bird deaths per turbine per year were as high as 309 in Germany and 895 in Sweden.**" (2)

Duchamp has always maintained that earlier studies, made when bird mortality at windfarms wasn't such a hot potato, were more credible than recent ones. "It is a curious business where those consultants who find or predict the lowest mortality land all the contracts. This is what is being asked of them, and this is what they do. **This unethical conduct has already condemned the Tasmanian Wedge-tailed eagle to extinction (3), and more recently the Golden Eagle in the United States (4).** Another factor is the occultation of carcasses by windfarm employees, as may be seen in the SEO/Birdlife report." (5)

The report also stresses that even a small incremental mortality for bird species whose populations are not abundant may drive them to extinction. "This is what I have been claiming for years", laments Mark, who has been banned from ornithology forums as an unwelcomed messenger of bad news. "I am now vindicated, but that won't save the birds", he says.

SEO/Birdlife puts the blame on poor-quality environmental studies. So did Duchamp, as early as 2004:

“...(avian impact assessments)... are sometimes voluminous and obfuscating, sometimes short and to the point, **but mendacious always**, minimizing the avian impact. They serve the purpose that is assigned to them: permit the erection of windfarms where the promoters want them, regardless of bird activity in the area.” (6)

Mark has long been claiming that it was foolish to allow environmental impact assessments to be directed and controlled by wind farm developers. It now appears he was right. The question is, he concludes: "will this aberration be allowed to continue?"

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References:

(1) - On SEO/Birdlife webpage:

http://www.seo.org/sala_detalle.cfm?idSala=6140&CFID=5713153&CFTOKEN=27775615&jsessionid=aa306c3dc5133e6b06d3

- In the media: <http://www.abc.es/20120112/natural-biodiversidad/abci-parques-eolicos-aves-201201121310.html> (see also La Razón, and others)

(2) - PIER Study of the California Energy Commission (2002). See page 12, first paragraph - D. Sterner, for the California Energy Commission (Dec. 2002) A Roadmap for PIER Research on Avian Collisions with Wind Turbines in California.

http://www.iberica2000.org/documents/EOLICA/REPORTS/Dave_Sterner_2002.pdf

(3) - Suspicious error by consultant condemns Tasmanian eagle to extinction

<http://www.iberica2000.org/Es/Articulo.asp?Id=4382>

(4) - The Golden Eagle in peril in the US

http://savetheeaglesinternational.org/?page_id=755

(5) - SEO/Birdlife report: http://www.seo.org/media/docs/Manual_molinos.pdf see page 11 - 2)

(6) - Chilling Statistics <http://www.iberica2000.org/Es/Articulo.asp?Id=1875>



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