



Singing the Praises of Wind Energy?

Wind energy is one of the fastest growing forms of energy as we try to use less oil, gas, or coal. But, this new “green-energy” is not without its own problems. Researchers say that nocturnal birds and bats are hurt by these large windmills, and that there has been no way to study their effect on birds until now.

Songbirds are by far the largest group of flying creatures in most ecosystems. Until recently they have had the largest number of deaths at large wind facilities. One study showed that three quarters of the deaths found at wind-energy facilities outside of California were protected songbirds. Half of these were nocturnal birds.

Recent studies indicate that these large windmills have also killed more bats than were expected. In particular, large numbers of bats have been killed by windmills built along the tops of forested ridges in the eastern US. The problem is that some states do not do bird counts on threatened or

endangered species prior to a windmill being constructed.

Making observations of nighttime activity requires using the right methods and equipment -- at the proper time and place, say researchers. They recommend a variety of methods and equipment to study the full effects of wind-energy facilities.

Suggested equipment includes night vision cameras, radar, as well as special microphones (for birds and bats). With proper monitoring, scientists suggest we may get a better idea of the effect that the windmills are having on nocturnal birds and bats.

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Do wind turbines provide us with “green energy”?

