

HIGH VOLTAGE POWER LINES & BIRDS

The Myth:

Overhead high voltage power lines do not have a negative impact on birds.

The Facts:

● Bird deaths resulting from collision with overhead transmission lines have been reported for over 100 years (Coues 1876, Cohen 1896, Emerson 1904). Species killed during these earlier studies included horned larks, phalaropes (shorebird), ruddy ducks and rails (waterbirds) (species also recorded along EPCOR's and AltaLink's preferred and alternate routes for the Heartland line).

- Transmission line collisions resulted in 36% mortality of fledged (able to fly) sandhill cranes in the Rocky Mountains (Drewien 1973), 44% mortality of fledged trumpeter swans in Wyoming (Lockman 1988), and 40% mortality of endangered fledged whooping cranes in the Rocky Mountains (Lewis 1993).
- Based on a wetlands study in North Dakota, waterbirds (46% documented mortality), waterfowl (26%), shorebirds (8%) and perching birds (5%) were most vulnerable to strikes with transmission lines (Faanes 1987). The author used these data to estimate 124 bird deaths per kilometer of power line per year.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2002) estimated up to 174 million bird deaths annually in the U.S. from collisions with overhead transmission lines, which is greater than the number of bird deaths from hunting.

Trumpeter Swan



Great Blue Heron

- In the Netherlands, Koops (1987) examined 4,666km of bulk transmission line, and estimated 750,000 to one million birds killed per year.
- Ainley et al. (2001) recommended burying high voltage power lines in areas where there were larger concentrations of birds to eliminate collision deaths.
- The electrical utility industry is poorly monitored for both bird collisions and electrocutions (Manville 2005). Overhead power lines electrocute tens to hundreds of thousands of birds annually in the U.S.
- Huckabee (1993) and Bevanger (1998) found that large, less maneuverable birds are more vulnerable to collisions with power lines, including herons, cranes, swans, and pelicans. Canada geese, larger duck species and grouse are also less maneuverable. Eared grebes were particularly vulnerable to power line collisions (Malcolm 1982). Bevanger (1998) found that herons, falcons, owls and perching birds were frequently electrocuted by power lines. (All of these species are also recorded along EPCOR's and AltaLink's preferred and alternate routes for the Heartland line.)

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