



Clean Energy. For Generations.

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## Wind Energy and Wildlife

### Do wind farms impact bird populations?

Research has found that when properly sited, wind energy projects have relatively little impact on bird populations. A recent Danish study found that seabirds tend to fly around offshore turbines and concluded that the environmental impacts of offshore wind farms are minimal. Bird habitat loss was also found to be negligible, as wind farms are relatively small compared with overall habitat and migratory routes. As part of the Application for an Environmental Assessment Certificate for phase one of the NaiKun wind project, several bird studies will be conducted to assess any potential impacts associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the wind farm. More detailed information on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) can be found on-line at: [http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/epic/output/html/deploy/epic\\_project\\_home\\_230.html](http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/epic/output/html/deploy/epic_project_home_230.html)

In the United States, roughly 0.003% of all bird fatalities caused by humans are associated with wind turbines. On the other hand, annual bird mortality rates due to collisions with buildings or window are between 98-980 million, collisions with power lines cause 174 bird deaths per year, vehicle collisions account for 60-80 million bird deaths, and house cats are responsible for killing 100 million birds per year.<sup>1</sup>

### Are birds considered when choosing locations for wind farms?

The potential impacts of wind projects on birds, other wildlife, and surrounding habitat are investigated through a rigorous Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) review process. Ultimately, the successful completion of an EIA is required before any power development project can be constructed. Wind developers choose project sites carefully, with environmental and wildlife considerations and potential impacts in mind. As part of the Environmental Assessment for the NaiKun project, regular communications have taken place with the Canadian Wildlife Service to study potential impacts on bird populations within the wind farm area. The studies will be conducted both before and after the project is developed. In addition to careful consideration of potential environmental impacts, wind farms must also be located in areas where there are strong, consistent winds, and where construction is practical.

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<sup>1</sup> National Wind Coordinating Committee and Curry & Kerlinger, LLC.



## Does global warming impact bird habitat and populations?

Wind energy provides clean, renewable power that can help reduce the use of harmful fossil fuels that contribute to global warming. A 2006 World Wildlife Fund report highlights that global warming is altering bird migratory patterns and causing loss of habitat. Extinction rates could be as high as 38% in Europe and 72% in northeastern Australia, if global warming exceeds 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Burning and extracting fossil fuels such as coal can also cause habitat loss. The resulting pollution also harms local air quality and poses health risks to both humans and wildlife.

## Are the fishing and crabbing industries impacted?

There is no evidence suggesting total fish or crab catch will decline as a result of wind farm development. Some environmental groups believe that wind farms will provide welcome sanctuary for fish spawning as well as refuge from intensive fisheries activity. NaiKun is actively working with fisheries and crabbers to accommodate their concerns and identify areas of mutual interest.

## Are marine ecosystems impacted from wind farm development?

The relationship between wind project development and marine eco-systems is actively being researched around the world. Several recommendations for minimizing potential disturbance to marine life are already in place for offshore wind energy developments. These include, avoiding site works during sensitive periods, minimizing noise levels during construction, minimizing the effects of structures and cabling on marine life and avoiding the use of products that may pollute the marine environment.

## What do environmental groups say about the topic?

Many environmental organizations agree that renewable energy, including wind, is needed to help fight climate change. Greenpeace and World Wildlife Fund strongly advocate wind power, and conservation groups including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK) and the National Audubon Society (US) support wind power if turbines are sited properly.

To view the Danish environmental study from 2006 go to:

[http://www.ens.dk/graphics/Publikationer/Havvindmoeller/havvindmoellebog\\_nov\\_2006\\_skrm.pdf](http://www.ens.dk/graphics/Publikationer/Havvindmoeller/havvindmoellebog_nov_2006_skrm.pdf)



*"Audubon strongly supports wind power as a clean alternative energy source that reduces the threat of global warming...every source of energy has some environmental consequences...If we don't find ways to reduce these emissions, far more birds—and people—will be threatened by global warming than by wind turbines."*

(American Audubon Society, President Jack Flicker)



*David Suzuki: We cannot shout from the rooftops about the dangers of global warming and then turn around and shout even louder about the "dangers" of windmills...the real risk to birds comes not from windmills but from a changing climate, which threatens the very existence of bird species and their habitats.*

(The New Scientist <http://www.newscientist.com/channel/opinion/mg18624956.400-the-beauty-of-wind-farms.html>)

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