

Protecting the Restored Bald Eagle and Other Raptors



The proposal to build up to 70 industrial wind turbines that will rise over 600 feet into the sky with blades over 200 feet long makes it imperative that we understand the potential impact to our land, our lives and the local wildlife. One key concern is the intention of Lighthouse Wind to install turbines directly in the path of the major bird flyway along the Lake Ontario shore. The local and migrating raptor population in our

area is directly threatened by wind turbine installations, the increase of which in the U.S. has led to a growing number of birds killed by colliding with the blades of the turbines.

New York State played a crucial role in bird conservation history and the dramatic story of saving the bald eagle takes place in Western and Upstate NY. The steep decline of the eagle in the 60's and 70's was tied to the introduction of DDT, an insecticide that traveled through the food chain into the eagle population, thinning their shells and resulting in the decimation of the bird population. Use of DDT was banned in 1972. Just south of Rochester, near Hemlock Lake, was one pair of bald eagles nesting but unable to produce young. The plight of these majestic birds was dire.



A team from New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation began a bold and untested bald eagle restoration project in 1976 that brought this majestic bird from **one inactive nest to close to 300 nests in New York State today!** Within the last several years it has become more common in our area to witness the stunning sight of a bald eagle soaring overhead. There are four active nests in local refuge areas and several more identified on private land in the surrounding area.

A study released in September 2016 from Purdue University shows how raptor and industrial wind turbine interaction can result in the death of birds from outside of the wind turbine project area. It's known that golden

eagles and other large raptors living near turbines are killed by those turbines. *"Eagles tend to use that habitat around the turbines. It's windy there, so they can save energy and soar, and their preferred prey, California ground squirrels, is abundant there,"* said J. Andrew DeWoody, a Purdue professor of genetics in the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. *"As they soar, these eagles are often looking straight down, and they fail to see the rapidly moving turbine blades. They get hit by the blades, and carcasses are found on the ground under the turbines."*

The study used DNA samples to determine that golden eagles killed at the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area in northern California can come from hundreds of miles away. The Purdue findings indicate that environmental assessments "should take into consideration that animal populations affected by wind turbines may not be just local."



<http://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/releases/2016/Q3/wind-turbines-killing-more-than-just-local-birds,-study-finds.html>

Protecting Nocturnal Migrating Songbirds

The Lighthouse Wind project has been named one of the 10 worst-sited wind projects, either built or proposed, in the nation by the American Bird Conservancy because of its proposed location in a globally important bird migration path.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released a report in July 2016 on their radar study of migratory birds in the Lighthouse Wind proposed project area. The study summarized in part: "Our data demonstrate that the shoreline areas of Lake Ontario are important for migrating birds and bats. We have identified behaviors that concentrate migrants along the shoreline, demonstrated that these behaviors occur regularly throughout the season, and established that migrants are flying at altitudes that place them at risk of collision with current or future wind energy development in the area. The importance of shoreline areas, as revealed by our study, highlights the need to avoid these areas as migration corridors as recommended in the Service's Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines (USFWS 2012)."



Considering that the USFWS is favorable to renewable energy, their cautionary considerations should be taken very seriously.



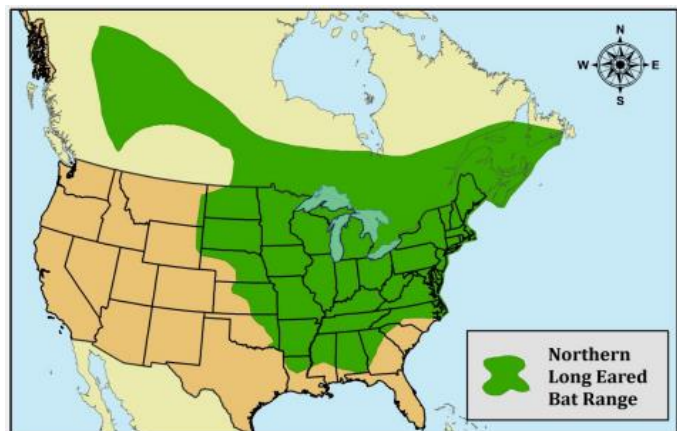
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has stated in its comments to the Lighthouse Wind Preliminary Scoping Statement that “the risk to wildlife from operating wind turbines could rise to severe levels.” Their 2013 radar study, released in July 2016, has confirmed that the altitude at which migrating raptors and songbirds are flying is within the area that turbine blades would potentially be operating. The study is available here:

<http://digitalmedia.fws.gov/cdm/singleitem/collection/document/id/2128/rec/1>

The American Bird Conservancy news release states, “Yet this region in New York has been targeted for enormous wind energy projects, including the proposed Lighthouse Wind facility—one of the nation's 10 worst for birds, according to our recent report. ‘This study is the smoking gun in the argument against installing wind energy so close to the lakeshore,’ said Dr. Michael Hutchins, Director of American Bird Conservancy's Bird-Smart Wind Energy Program. ‘If risk to birds means anything to our elected leaders, this should be the death knell to projects like Lighthouse, which is currently under serious consideration by New York's Public Service Commission.’”

Protecting Migrating Bats

Bats have special significance in an agricultural area as a natural form of insect control. But their numbers are decreasing. In the June 2016 issue of *Scientific American* Amy Mathews writes, “A research review published in January of this year found that wind turbines are, by far, the largest cause of mass bat mortality around the world. White-nose syndrome, the deadly fungal disease that has decimated bat populations throughout the northeastern U.S., came in second.” There are multiple problems in adequately protecting these precious and often endangered bats from turbines. Testing for bat locations and behavior is expensive and time consuming. Ground level monitors are inadequate for testing. Bats are drawn toward the turbines for unknown reasons. Therefore, the fact that they were not found prior to construction does not mean that they will not be present once the turbines are built. Even when high risk sites are designated, the post building mortality rates indicate that mitigation is not effective. One recent study concludes that regarding wind turbines “there is a pressing global need to identify the procedures which can accurately identify risk to bats. (Ecological impact assessments fail to reduce risk of bat casualties at wind farms by Lintott, Richardson, Hosken, Sophie, Fensome and Mathews, November 2016.)



Letter Writing! – Birds, Bats and Raptors Need YOUR HELP!

Describe your connection to the area and your concerns about the Lighthouse Wind industrial wind turbines. Ask your friends and family to also submit comments.

Here are some excerpts from letters which have already been submitted:

Letter #1: “This wind farm will be detrimental to hundreds of thousands of migrating birds. some endangered and rare. Not only is Ontario trying to bring back the Loggerhead Strike population (this will surely kill those newly released birds); there is this link. These are just two species that would be killed due to the placement and impact of the wind turbines. <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/scientists-track-first-time-one-rarest-songbirds-its-yearlong-migration-180962390/?fref=gc&dti=568950929792567> “

Letter #2: “This morning, I witnessed the eagle snatch a large fish from Lake Ontario and carry it away in his talons, heading directly south, toward known eagle nesting sites in the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge in Genesee and Orleans counties. The path of the eagle's flight home would take him directly through the spinning blades of the 600-foot tall wind turbines proposed for the Lighthouse Wind project. This project, proposed by Apex Clean Energy, would be disastrous to protected wildlife in our region, and should never be built along the south shore of Lake Ontario. Siting of this project is blatantly ill conceived and has been condemned by many conservation groups, including the American Bird Conservancy as one of the 10 worst-sited existing and proposed commercial wind projects. I support "environmentally smart" clean energy projects.”

Letter #3: “This time of year thousands of birds are migrating to the shores of Lake Ontario. If Industrial Wind Turbines are allowed in this area many migrating birds could be killed. This could change the ecology of our area forever. The US Fish and Wildlife Service strongly recommends that Apex carefully consider the potential effect of Lighthouse Wind project design, construction and operation on wildlife, including migrating bats and birds. The Service further states that the project is proposed in an area known to have very high avian activity, as evidenced by the studies complete to date. The risk to wildlife from operating Industrial Wind turbines in this region could rise to severe levels. Previously the service recommended that wind energy projects be constructed at least 3 miles from the Great Lakes to reduce these risks. Please consider this valid information.”

Your comments can be mailed to:

A letter to the NY PSC:

Attention: Case Number 14-F-0485

Hon. Kathleen H. Burgess
Secretary to the Commission
NYS Public Service Commission
Three Empire State Plaza
Agency Building 3
Albany, NY 12223-1350

A letter to the NYS DEC:

Attention: Lighthouse Wind Project

Commissioner Basil Seggos
NY State Department of Environmental
Conservation
625 Broadway
New York, NY 12233-1010

To submit via the DPS website online:

<http://documents.dps.ny.gov>

And type the following number in the
“Search by Case Number”: **14-F-0485**