

To Mr. Mark Duchamp,

Brussels, 25/02/2004 (update of earlier version)

As a scientist I always look with a healthy critical eye at every publication of research results, both coming from the wind industry and from some (independent) environmentalists and conservationists at the other side. On this moment I conduct a research project to determine the effects of wind turbines on birds in Flanders (Belgium), and act as an independent counsel for the government, project developers, and others. I have knowledge about research results on the impact of wind farms on birds in several countries, but I do not always have the time to read every publication thoroughly, in some cases just the summary or part of a summary of it in other publications.

Wind turbines do not belong in/near important bird areas and on important migration routes. Any serious researcher in the field will confirm that. As a biologist I am also concerned about the (cumulative) negative impacts of the large scale implantation of wind turbines. I am afraid that we are going to create a lot of disturbance in our remaining virginal landscapes and certainly to many birds/bird populations, this all for a small part in the electricity production. On the practical point of view, a good site selection policy therefore is very important. But I am also of the opinion that governments should first conduct an independent cost-benefit analysis before making radical policy decisions like the large scale implantation of wind farms.

I also know that there are still questions and discussion among biologists about the real impact of wind turbines on raptors and migrating birds in the Tarifa area (Spain), California, and some other locations, but I was surprised to read in your critical analysis (Duchamp, 2003), that there has also been falsification of the figures, with misleading summaries of reports.

So I began to check your claims. I have read the Grainger Hunt report (California), the Birdlife International report (review for Bern Convention), and parts of the Lekuona and SEO-Birdlife report (Spain). Comparing these reports, the summaries of these reports, and your critical analysis, I found that your analysis is very interesting and full of verifiable data. You make some very important points. It seems to me now that many summaries are indeed misleading the reader, I think deliberately in some cases (like the Lekuona report summary written by the government of Navarre), and with questions about some irregularities in summaries (partly for the SEO-Birdlife and Grainger Hunt report) or incomplete study methods in other cases (for the SEO-Birdlife report; mortality of small birds and some raptors). The problem with the Birdlife International report (review for Bern Convention) is that I think that the authors didn't had the time to read through the whole reports (only the sometimes incomplete summaries), and by doing so, they copied the incomplete and misleading figures. After reading your critical analysis and revising the whole Birdlife International report (first version), I wrote Birdlife a letter with some remarks concerning a number of errors and/or incomplete or misleading figures and sentences. At the end of 2003, Birdlife made an updated second version of their report, with several corrections and more recent data, for example some proper corrections for the mortality issue in California and Tarifa, and the new Lekuona study from Navarra was also added. The report (including the recommendations) is much better now.

I have posted your critical analysis to several researchers, but haven't got much response from my international colleagues yet. From a biologist in France I got a positive response. He was very pleased to see your remarks (and my own results of collision victims in Flanders), because most wind turbine builders in France always say that the turbines do not kill many birds. A researcher in Sweden made the response "very interesting reading....". From a representative of Birdlife Belgium I also got a positive response. He was pleased to hear that somebody now said that the effects of collision are "under-estimated", because they always get remarks from the wind industry lobby that they "over-estimate" the amount of collisions.

Sincerely yours,



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Ref. DUCHAMP, M., 2003. Critical analysis of 4 reports on bird mortality at wind farms. Calpe, Spain. Iberica 2000. <http://www.iberica2000.org/Es/Articulo.asp?Id=1223>