

Water birds do not fly near windmills

Researchers at the National Environmental Research Institute NERI have used radar to study the reaction of migratory water birds approaching a windmill farm. Eider and geese at Nysted offshore windmill farm, Falster, do in fact discover the whirling blades, and most of them therefore manage to fly in between the windmills, thus, avoiding collision. Almost 9 per cent of the flights of birds in the area fly into the windmill farm – the rest fly around it. However, their behaviour varies in accordance with the time of the day. The birds are more aware of the windmills during the day, and only 4.5 per cent of the flights of birds fly through the farm, while during the night, the figure is 13.8.



Researchers count and identify bird species by telescope surveillance.

The analyses also show that the birds keep at a larger distance from the windmills during the night, while flying through the corridor between the mills, thus minimising the risk of flying into the mills. Generally, less than 1 per cent of the migratory water birds flew so close to the mills that there was a risk of collision.

From the results of the study it appears that the ability of the birds to avoid collision with the windmills should be taken into account, in order not to overestimate the risk of collision. The researchers underline that the study only includes results recorded in the first year after power production was initiated in the area. There was also quite a lot of navigation by ships in the area, which might have affected the flight pattern of the birds. Besides, the passage of birds in the areas is completely

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dominated by eider and goose. Other sea birds may react differently when passing windmill farms, and this should be studied.



Radar on the observation towers follows the flight of birds, and shows it on a screen inside the tower.

The study at Nysted continues in 2005, aiming at collecting more knowledge on the flight pattern of birds near offshore windmill farms and at examining whether the birds react differently after some time, because they are getting used to the mills.



Section of the screen is inserted in the picture. Green lines show the movements of the birds.

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Article in full: Mark Desholm & Johnny Kahlert: Avian collision risk at an offshore wind farm. Biology Letters 2005.

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