



Power Lines and Golden Eagles

Editorial Comment by Gerald Mallmann (November-December, 2002)

There is an electrocution problem in Idaho which is probably greater than in most states because of the larger golden eagle population. The state still does have a healthy population in spite of shootings, poisonings, and the electrocution problem. The loss nationwide is significant, however, but it is reassuring to know that the solution is economically feasible and practical. Because in some states this bird is practically extinct, the developments would be well worthwhile studying.

The problem occurs mostly on single-pole, cross-arm type construction and with the help of 16mm slow motion photography, some redesigning helped ease the losses. Interestingly enough, after observing and tabulating the landing sites of the eagles, it was discovered that only 2% of Idaho Power's poles needed correction.

That type or correction can be either in structure type design change or corrections with conductor insulation covers, or by installing perches about the conductors. The young eagles learning to fly immediately took to these perches and the problem was minimized. An ongoing study of their nesting habits, etc. provides further clues for protection of this species.

The Idaho Power Company has an active program including these actions:

1. Utilize the services of a nationally recognized authority on birds of prey.
2. Identify the areas inhabited by raptors.
3. Investigate where electrocutions have occurred.
4. Educate the public that many birds found near power lines have been shot or poisoned, not electrocuted.
5. Modify preferred existing structures for bird safety.
6. Design structures for new construction that provide safety. *LSI*