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## **Scientists to Investigate Wind Power Impacts on Migratory Wildlife**

*Industry and conservation  
representatives set research priorities*

*Racine, WI & Ithaca, NY, July 23, 2009—*

Thirty top wildlife scientists have announced agreement on some of the highest research priorities to help America's rapidly growing wind energy industry produce much-needed alternative energy—while also providing safe passage for birds and bats. This coalition of scientists from industry, government, nongovernmental organizations, and universities met recently in Racine, Wisconsin, to address



unanswered questions about how continued wind energy development will affect migrating birds and bats. The meeting was hosted by the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#), the [American Bird Conservancy](#), and the [The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread](#).

“We see great potential in wind energy for addressing global climate change and reducing America’s reliance on fossil fuels,” said Dr. Michael Fry of the American Bird Conservancy. “It’s critical we act now to understand the interactions between wind energy installations and birds and bats.”

“Billions of birds migrate annually, taking advantage of the same wind currents that are most beneficial for producing wind energy,” said Dr. Andrew Farnsworth of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “We know that in some locations a small percentage of wind turbines may cause the majority of bird and bat deaths. For example, Altamont Pass, east of Oakland, California, is an extreme case: in an area used regularly by migrant and resident raptors, only a fraction of the 5,000 turbines are responsible for most of the raptor deaths annually. As wind power develops further, we need to know more about how placement, design, and operation impact birds and bats as well as how habitat and weather conditions affect potential hazards.”

The scientists addressed the critical information that could be collected using cutting-edge tools such as weather surveillance radar, thermal imaging, and microphones directed skyward to map migrations by day and night. New research will build upon monitoring and research studies of birds and bats before and after construction of existing wind energy facilities as well as work done by other researchers. The coalition appointed

working groups to move this new research agenda forward. Top research priorities identified by the coalition include:

- Studying bird and bat behaviors and more accurately estimating mortality at existing wind turbines
- Using current and newly-obtained information on bird and bat population numbers and distributions to focus research on critically important migratory routes and timing
- Documenting how interactions of birds and bats with turbines are affected by factors such as weather, topography, and their distribution within airspace swept by wind turbine blades
- Establish standardized methods for pre- and post-construction studies of bird and bat behavior at wind facilities
- Conduct research on the best methods for mitigating the impacts of wind energy development on birds and bats

“Conducting this research will help the wind industry make informed, science-based decisions about where future wind energy projects can be built, and how they can be operated to minimize the impact on migrating wildlife, while still providing much-needed alternative energy,” said Dr. John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “It will also help flesh out specific guidelines for wind farm construction being developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

“Imagine if a similar effort had taken place at the turn of the 20th century with the auto industry and air quality,” said Kraig Butrum, President and CEO of the [American Wind Wildlife Institute](#), an umbrella organization for the wind energy industry and environmental groups. “We’d probably be in a completely different place when it comes to global climate change and energy dependence, because we considered environmental impact from the start.”

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*The American Wind Wildlife Institute is a nonprofit organization focused on timely and responsible development of wind energy while protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat*

*through research, mapping, mitigation and public education on best practices in wind farm siting and wildlife habitat protection. Visit the AWWI website at [www.awwi.org](http://www.awwi.org).*

*The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds.. Visit the Cornell Lab's website at [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu).*

*The American Bird Conservancy is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to conserve native wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. Visit the ABC website at [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org).*

*The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread seeks to be a catalyst for environmental and community solutions using leading-edge convening models at a unique, world-class conference center. The Foundation brings together leading scholars and decision-makers from the public and private sectors, forms partnerships, commissions research and shares information to broaden the dialogue around environmental challenges and solutions. Guided by the belief that new solutions are needed to ensure the sustainability of environmental systems, the Foundation does not advocate specific solutions nor bring preconceived ideas to its work on any issue. Visit [www.johnsonfdn.org](http://www.johnsonfdn.org) to learn more.*

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