

PROTECTED BIRDS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWERS

Telecommunications towers and equipment platforms are attractive nest sites for some species of birds. Learn what you can do to discourage nesting on new towers.

TOWERS AND PROTECTED BIRDS

Many types of birds, especially raptor species (eagles, osprey, etc.), find telecommunications towers ideal nesting locations due to their prominence. Towers are the tallest structure in the



Osprey

area, offering a great vantage point for birds to roost while surveying the surrounding landscape for food. These factors, combined with “convenient” platforms that are part of a tower’s structure, result in a location that is an ideal nesting site.

For some bird species, the tower is not the attractant at all: a graveled compound or access road provides the habitat required for nesting.

However ideal these locations are for nesting birds, they can be very inconvenient for tower owners and technicians. Most of the birds encountered on or near towers are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which prohibits all activities that harm, harass, disturb, or otherwise affect birds, their eggs, and their nests. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act also establish laws that protect birds by prohibiting activities that disturb protected birds.

PERFORMING TOWER WORK

With so many regulations in place, it can be difficult to perform routine maintenance on towers and their equipment during certain times of the year. When possible, it is best to restrict tower activities to the non-breeding season, the time of year when birds are not actively nesting or caring for dependent young. This time varies between geographic locations and the species of bird concerned.

When work must be performed during the breeding season, it is important to visually inspect the tower and compound for active nests (those with eggs or flightless young). If active nests are observed, work should not proceed until a qualified professional identifies the bird species, nest status, and appropriate precautions and rules that apply to the situation.

PREVENTING NESTING ON TOWERS

It is easier to prevent birds from nesting on towers/compounds than it is to work around active nests. Tower developers can use the following suggestions to reduce the possibility of migratory birds nesting on telecommunications structures:

- Utilize nest exclusion devices on the top of lattice and monopole towers. These devices transform the tower from a flat, tree-like shape into a conical shape that is not attractive for roosting or nesting.
- Provide an Artificial Nesting Platform (ANP) on the tower. These platforms provide an appealing place for birds to nest, which encourages them to utilize the ANP rather than tower equipment.
- Suspending bird effigies (“scarecrows”) from the structure may reduce the chance of birds using the tower.

- **Telecommunications towers and their compounds are attractive roosting and nesting locations for some types of birds**
- **Many species of birds are protected by law, limiting the work that can be done in their presence**
- **Installing a nesting or roosting deterrent can lower the chances of birds using the tower**

Black Mountain Consulting LLC is a Pacific Northwest-based environmental consulting and engineering firm that prides itself on high quality service and client education.