

Training workshop *Management of Wildlife Interactions with Power Line Networks*

Report 2: Windhoek
(20 October 2009)



Windhoek

1. Contact details of participants

Windhoek (20/10/09 at NamPower Training Centre)			
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2. Workshop programme

08h30 *Registration & tea/coffee*

09h00 Introduction to NamPower/NNF partnership and the EIS

09h30 Electrocutions

10h00 Collisions

10h30 *Tea/coffee*

11h00 Birds nesting on power lines

11h30 Incident reporting

12h00 Discussion and actions

12h30 *Tea/coffee/snacks*

13h30 Power line inspection: east of Van Eck power station

3. General discussion

Collisions/electrocution

- The City of Windhoek (Edward Kawesha) has technology on avoiding wildlife/power line conflicts or outages.
- All the power lines in the north-east are concentrated in the Tsumeb area, including the new Caprivi line. Has there been any study on what happens at the substation at Tsumeb? Does NamPower care about the bird nests? Support from NamPower Management is needed when dealing with farmers. Is NamPower really concerned?
- Why are birds seldom – if ever – seen on cellphone towers?

Environmental Information System (EIS)

- There is a danger that consultants will cut and paste from the EIS, and not take into account the constant changes in the environment.
- With the EIS there is a danger that shortcuts may be taken, and that a “quick and dirty” could become a substitute for an EIA.
- A proper environmental assessment is always needed. The EIS will provide the information, but it is up to the consultant to do the interpretation.

EIAs

- Recommendations are made in EIAs but feedback on implementation is not often received. Does NamPower have any data on bird interactions with power lines?
- NamPower has implemented some of the recommendations made in EIAs in the past, e.g. flappers, rerouting of lines. We need to create awareness throughout the ranks of NamPower. Monitoring is not always implemented.
- Are the REDs also involved? The small HPLCD structures (with three lines) do not need an EIA.

Mitigation

- Mass markers on power lines, insulated with a conductor, could be used to make power lines more visible to birds.
- At substations, silicon rubber could be used to cover all equipment and prevent damage from birds; this method has been used successfully in SA – but an EIA needs to be in place first. Other methods of keeping wildlife away include spikes.
- Bustards tend to fly over, rather than under power lines. “Eagle Eyes” have been used by the Ministry of Agriculture, i.e. disco balls that turn and flash. In the North this is an inexpensive method that is helping to keep up to 30% of “pest” birds out.
- Small seed-eaters do not like the smell of grapes, and this olfactory method is being used to repel small seed-eaters.
- The City of Windhoek is busy with a Biodiversity List/Plan, and wildlife/power line interactions are relevant.
- The spatial scale of the project is the whole of Namibia.
- We need to find out what has been done in Europe in terms of mitigations.

Nesting

- Pygmy Falcons have come in for treatment at NARREC after being burnt (in the South). Is fire being used to destroy Sociable Weaver nests?
- How easy is it to move a Sociable Weaver nest?
- Has any study been done on fires caused by bird nests?
- Many raptors, crows, Giant Eagle Owls are attracted to the tops of Sociable Weaver nests.

Injured birds

- Burns are painful; the bird easily becomes dehydrated. Put it in a box or cover its head, and get the bird to a vet or to NARREC.
- If the burn has just happened, cool the wound and cover it with gauze. It may be necessary to apply rehydration fluids, and antibiotics. A high voltage burn will be deep.

General

- NamPower started work on solar alternatives 30 years ago. When discussing mitigation, we need to promote alternative energy as a matter of urgency.
- How often is land cleared under a power line?
- Power lines are creating access into areas where people should not be driving (e.g. people are using NamPower roads in Windhoek municipal area for poaching, collecting firewood). Get NamPower to make sure gates are secure.

4. Summary of actions

4.1 Initiate “adopt a power line” surveys

- Draw up a schedule with like-minded persons.
- Involve students and consider incentives.
- Observe the correct protocol, as power lines cross private land.
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with NamPower on power line surveys – try to link in and share knowledge.

4.2 Promote awareness

- Through the Agra “Ring”; talks at farmers’ association meetings (NAU & NNFU).
- Create awareness amongst NamPower and the REDS; municipalities.
- Work through the Namibia Bird Club.
- Involve landowners - farm owners are listed in EIAs; target tourists as well, e.g. hunters at airports, as they go out onto farms and could help report incidents.

4.3 EIS and EIAs

- Share technologies on mitigations, e.g. through the project newsletter.
- Contribute information to the EIS, e.g. completed EIAs; databases of farm owners on power line routes.
- Include a bird specialist on EIA team, as a requirement.
- Initiate checklists for smaller power lines.
- Assist with mapping of power lines.

5. Power line inspection

See Appendix 1 for report.

6. Acknowledgements

Thank you to:

- All our enthusiastic participants!
- NamPower for assistance with organization and logistics: Danie Louw, Karl-Heinz Wagner, Gloudi de Beer, Rauna Shaumbwako
- Venue: NamPower training centre; refreshments: Annette de Waal
- Training materials/inputs: Chris van Rooyen, Liz Komen (NARREC) and Alice Jarvis (EIS)
- NamPower staff (especially Gloudini de Beer) for their interest and willingness to facilitate the power line inspection
- European Investment Bank for sponsoring the project

Martial Eagle photograph: NARREC; other photographs by Ann Scott




NamPower/NNF Strategic Partnership



Power line inspection report

Inspection details	
Date	20/10/09
Time	13h00
Present	Liz Komen, Gloudi de Beer, Joe Walter, Uschi Kirchner, John Pallett, Mike & Ann Scott
Area/line	East of the Van Eck Power Station, Windhoek. The area is crossed by a number of power lines due to the proximity of the power station, including 220kV structures.
Distance covered (GPS points)	22 30 35.94S 17 05 03.55E and surrounds
	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Google image of the area investigated</i></p>
Vegetation and habitat beneath line	Bushy including alien <i>Prosopis</i> ; the area is heavily degraded by industrial activity.
Weather	Overcast, some thunder and rain

Motivation	<p>The area has a high potential for wildlife/power line interactions. A Martial Eagle (<i>Endangered</i>) was found here with extensive burns to her left wing by Mr Richard Peterson on 28/7/09. The site of the collision is believed to be near the above site, i.e. 22 30 10.7S 17 04 53.6E. This bird arrived at NARREC with severe infection of the wound and a weight loss of about 30%, which could mean that she had been on the ground, wounded, for about a week. This area is crossed by a number of power lines and pylons. Liz Komen of NARREC believes this was a collision with high voltage wire as the line of burn into the flesh, though healed, is still visible. Just four weeks later and already at a weight of 4.8 kg, she is out of NARREC's intensive care facility and in a rehabilitation aviary as she is prepared for release.</p> 
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Findings	
Bird mortalities	No signs
Bird nests	None seen
Raptors (live)	None seen
Recommendations	
Monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The area has a high potential for bird collisions, especially by large raptors, and should be monitored regularly in view of incidents such as the above one concerning the Martial Eagle. 2. Proactive mitigation in the form of markers could be investigated in problematical areas.



Top: The area east of the Van Eck Power Station is crossed by a multitude of power line structures, with a high potential for collisions including by raptors; note the degraded habitat.

Below: Part of the survey team (L to R): Joe Walter, Liz Komen, Gloudi de Beer, John Pallett, Mike Scott and Uschi Kirchner