

More dead birds found under transmission line in southern Alberta

Company says it's very concerned about the latest discovery

BY COLETTE DERWORIZ, CALGARY HERALD FEBRUARY 25, 2014



More dead ducks have been found two months after retired research scientist and nearby resident David McIntyre found dozens of freshly killed ducks and the remains of others along a transmission line in southern Alberta.

Photograph by: Photo courtesy David McIntyre

For the second time this winter, AltaLink is investigating dozens of dead birds found under one of its transmission lines in southern Alberta.

Officials confirmed Tuesday that the birds were found last week and noted a team of avian experts has again been dispatched to the area to determine what happened.

It's believed there's about a hundred mallard ducks and at least one Canada goose.

“We’re still doing our investigation and the report is not complete so I cannot confirm the number of birds involved, nor the species,” said Peter Brodsky, a spokesman for AltaLink.

He said, however, they received the report from a contractor last week about the dead birds.

The latest discovery comes two months after retired research scientist and nearby resident David McIntyre found dozens of freshly killed ducks and the remains of others along the same line, which was built in June 2012.

An investigation by AltaLink found about 345 birds — mallard ducks and at least one grey partridge — were killed after hitting a transmission line in mid-December.

It was deemed unusual, concluding that a low ceiling and high winds lowered the flight path of the birds.

Brodsky said they are again investigating if the weather could be the cause in the most recent incident.

“It’s difficult to say what may have caused the birds to fly into the line,” he said, noting there were snow squalls and high winds in the area last week.

In addition, there appears to be some bald eagles and hawks frequenting the area.

“We are investigating the eagles and their ability to, for lack of a better word, frighten the ducks into a particular situation,” said Brodsky. “That’s still under investigation.”

McIntyre, who heard about the latest incident from others in the area, said it’s a major concern that it has happened again — although he expects the incidents are more common than are being publicly revealed.

“The big thing that makes these register in this particular place is the fact that there are roughly 10,000 waterfowl right in that area and they are right next to a major highway,” he said.

McIntyre said the most troubling issue is that the line was built in the area in the first place.

“They tell us how they won’t go into areas where there are high waterfowl concentrations to avoid this type of thing,” he said. “How could they not see what every person who travels Highway 3 would see in spades?”

“There are thousands of waterfowl and the transmission lines that are being put up are right between the resting place for those ducks and where they feed.”

Brodsky said the avian specialists are looking at the relationship between the ducks’ habitat and the location of the lines.

“Most importantly for us, because we are still very concerned about this, is how we can put in mitigation techniques that will allow our power lines and the area ducks to coexist safely,” he said, noting they are installing larger diverters that should help deflect the birds.

“We take it very seriously, we’re very concerned.”