



The  
**Ornithological Society**

of New Zealand (Inc.)  
PO Box 834 Nelson 7040  
[www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Thursday 7 May, 2009

### **Potential impacts of wind farms on birds needs testing at every site**

Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) council representative, David Melville, says that the potential impacts of wind farms on birds needs testing at every proposed wind farm location, and that long-term monitoring is needed following construction.

Mr Melville says that while there has been a lot of information published about bird-strike deaths caused by wind farms in the Northern Hemisphere, it is not directly transferable to New Zealand wind farms or their proposals.

These statements were prompted by OSNZ's support for World Migratory Bird Day - Saturday-Sunday, May 9-10. Celebrated worldwide in over 60 countries last year, 'barriers to migration' is this year's theme, highlighting the impacts of man-made structures (obstacles) on the world's migratory birds.

Mr Melville said, "OSNZ promotes robust scientific survey and monitoring of bird movements in the vicinity of proposed wind farm locations, so that sound environmental decisions can be made and impacts on birds can be kept to a minimum.

"Long-term, post-construction monitoring is also important when considering whether mitigation measures are effective.

"Wind turbines potentially pose a significant threat to NZ's migratory birds including the South Island pied oystercatcher and the wrybill. Even a few deaths through bird-strike can be problematic for species as rare as the wrybill."

Because little is known about the movements of NZ's migratory birds, it is essential that every proposed wind farm location be assessed, to determine seasonal as well as daily patterns of bird movements in the vicinity.

Mr Melville expects that each proposed site will present different issues, and these cannot be predicted with the current information available and without knowing the details of the size of the wind farm and the height of the turbines.

"Proponents of wind farms need to carry out in-depth environmental assessments which identify the movements of all birds, so that the best location can be found and sufficient mitigation can be put in place", he said.

Several current proposals for wind farms on the west coast of Auckland and Waikato are sited near estuaries, known to be wintering grounds for the South Island pied oystercatcher and the wrybill.

Environmental impact assessments are currently underway to determine the birds' flight path, altitude and timing of arrivals and departures. Radar is used to track their movements, which often occur at night.

Local movements in the vicinity of wind farms possibly poses the most risk to the birds because of the low level of flight, whereas migratory movements may be at a higher altitude.

Ends.

### **Additional information:**

- World Migratory Bird Day ([www.worldmigratorybirdday.org](http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org)) was initiated under two international environmental treaties, administered by the United Nations Environment Programme, to raise awareness for the need to protect all migratory birds and their habitats throughout the world.
- OSNZ's position statement on wind farms is at: <http://www.osnz.org.nz/windfarm.htm>
- OSNZ ([www.osnz.org.nz](http://www.osnz.org.nz)) is not an advocacy group.
- OSNZ supports and promotes the scientific study of birds, and the recording and wide circulation of the results of bird studies and observations.
- OSNZ aims to assist the conservation and management of birds by providing information, from which sound management decisions can be derived.
- The Wrybill is endemic (ie. only found in NZ), is nationally vulnerable, and OSNZ estimate the total population is between 3,500 and 5,500 individuals.
- The South Island pied oystercatcher is declining. OSNZ estimate the total population is around 83,000 individuals.

### **Contact:**

David Melville, OSNZ council and scientific committee

Phone + 64 3 543 3628 (Nelson)

Email: [david.melville@xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.nz)

### **Photos:**

South Island pied oyster catchers flocking at Miranda (Firth of Thames) by Jesse Conklin (OSNZ)

Wrybills flocking at Miranda (Firth of Thames) by Jesse Conklin (OSNZ)

Wrybill by Dr Phil Battley (OSNZ)