

Flying start to power firm's plan

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By TARINA WHITE, SUN MEDIA

Alberta's largest energy transmission company is the first in Canada to create a plan to protect birds that fly into power lines and substations.

AltaLink yesterday unveiled its avian protection plan, which aims to mitigate the impact electrical facilities have on birds.

Nikki Heck, AltaLink's environmental adviser, said the company operates about 12,000 km of transmission line and more than 260 substations across Alberta.

"We do have a lot of bird impacts, so that's one of our target programs -- we want to try to reduce those impacts," said Heck.

"We try to be a responsible steward in the communities that we operate and we have a number of environmental protection programs to mitigate the impacts of our business."

AltaLink uses Alberta-designed protective covers for power lines and substations which prevent birds from making dangerous contact with electricity.

The transmission company has also donated \$5,000 to the Alberta Birds of Prey Foundation, a volunteer organization that rehabilitates injured birds. Each year, the foundation assists up to 200 birds, said director Colin Weir, adding about 10% are injured by power lines.

"We're just a very small charity, so that's a very significant one-time contribution for us -- we're absolutely delighted," said Weir.

He applauded AltaLink's new avian protection plan.

"They are being so proactive out there in Alberta trying to save the lives of these birds," said Weir.

"This extra mitigation work really helps reduce the risk of wildlife from getting injured."

From <http://calsun.canoe.ca/News/Alberta/2009/02/11/8345146-sun.html>



Scott Thon, president and CEO of AltaLink, holds Mr. Bogle, a Great Horned Owl from The Alberta Birds of Prey Foundation, after Thon's company donated \$5,000 to the foundation as part of AltaLink's new avian protection plan to protect birds from contact with electricity. (Stuart Dryden, Sun Media)