

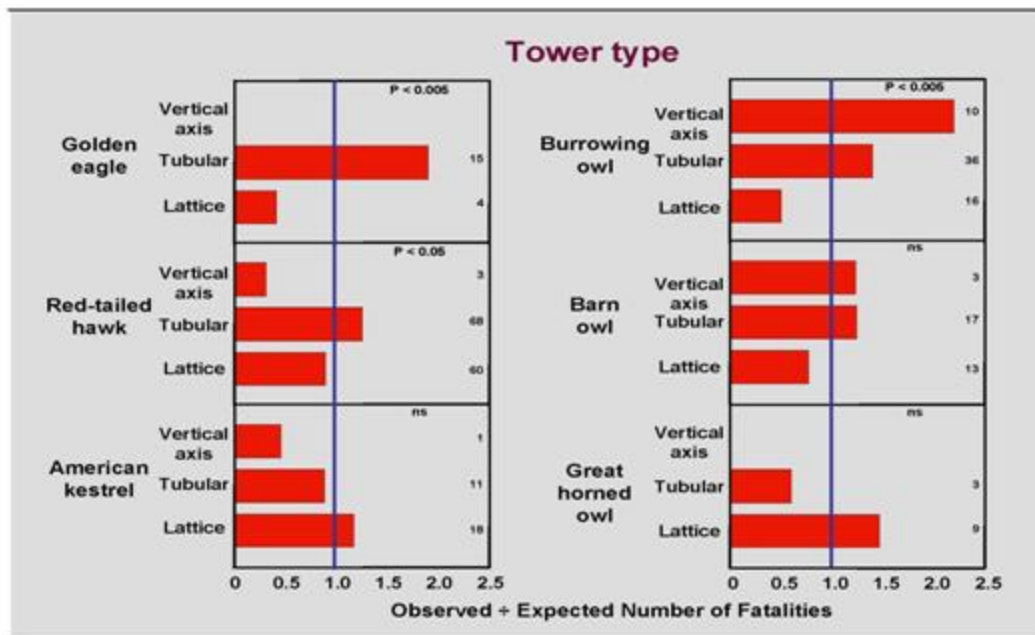


“Monopole” Wind Turbine Towers Are No Safer for Birds Than Older Lattice Towers



The claim is often made that monopole turbine towers (see above left) are safer for birds since they lack perching sites which could fatally attract hawks and other birds. The older turbines, such as those used at Altamont, had open lattice towers (see above right), and there was speculation that the cross-members of these older towers may have contributed to the very high raptor kill of this notorious wind energy facility. This plausible speculation was widely promoted by the wind industry, and the monopole turbine bases were heralded as significant design improvements to safeguard birds from collision with turbines. The claim was made so frequently that it was accepted as “gospel” by many organizations and government agencies (e.g., USFWS).

However, two recently published peer-reviewed studies have found this wishful thinking to be without merit. In the U.S., at Altamont, the latest scientific research documented that turbines with the tubular monopole tower were significantly more likely to kill Golden Eagles, Burrowing Owls and other raptors than turbines with the older lattice tower base (see graph below; from a presentation by Shawn Smallwood entitled “Raptor Mortality at the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area” - see Slide #42 in: www.nationalwind.org/events/wildlife/2003-2/presentations/Smallwood.pdf).



In addition, a recently-published study of bird mortality at a wind energy facility in Spain found no difference between wind turbines with lattice-base vs. monopole towers.

The issue of monopole vs. lattice towers is really a red-herring since all industrial wind turbines built in the US during the past 5 years have monopole towers.