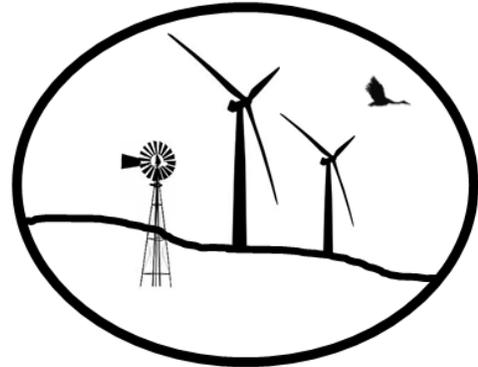


## Nebraska Wind Energy and Wildlife News

April 7, 2015



### Around Nebraska...

#### Nebraska Legislative Bills

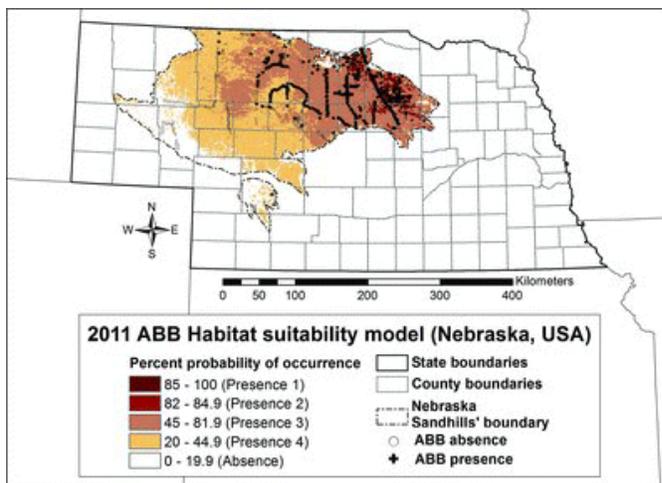
It is Legislative Session time again! Several bills related to energy and transmission have been introduced. The [Nebraska Legislative Bills](#) and updates are listed at the end of the message.

**[Nebraska committee advance renewable energy tax credit bill.](#)** A proposed tax credit for Nebraska-based renewable energy projects has advanced out of a legislative committee (LB 423). The measure by Sen. Jeremy Nordquist of Omaha would increase the state credit for facilities that generate electricity with wind and other renewable sources. The measure is designed to attract in-state investors and help Nebraska compete with nearby states that offer tax credits.

([http://www.starherald.com/news/regional\\_statewide/nebraska-committee-advance-renewable-energy-tax-credit-bill/article\\_0a67f428-9c96-5d9c-bc6f-0002b7630c03.html](http://www.starherald.com/news/regional_statewide/nebraska-committee-advance-renewable-energy-tax-credit-bill/article_0a67f428-9c96-5d9c-bc6f-0002b7630c03.html)).

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**[Identifying priority conservation areas for the American burying beetle, \*Nicrophorus americanus\* \(Coleoptera: Silphidae\), a habitat generalist.](#)** Jessica Jurzenski, Christopher F. Jorgensen , Andy Bishop , Roger Grosse , John Riens , W. Wyatt Hoback. Systematics and Biodiversity Vol. 12, Iss. 2, 2014.



**Abstract:** Conservation efforts leading to the recovery of the federally endangered American burying beetle (ABB), *Nicrophorus americanus* Olivier, have been challenging because of the unknown causes of its decline, difficulty in establishing habitat requirements, and unclear population distribution across the species' range. Extant populations of this widespread generalist species occur in broadly separated regions of North America with varying habitat characteristics. A habitat suitability model for ABB in the Nebraska Sandhills was developed over the course of 3 years resulting in a final cross-validated spatial model. The succession of models from 2009 to 2011 indicated that most of the

predictive variables stayed constant, but biased sampling and extrapolation areas affected classifier values differently. Variables associated with ABB occurrence were loamy sand, wetland and precipitation. Five variables, loam soil, agriculture, woodland, the average maximum temperature, and urban development, were associated with ABB absence. The 2011 cross-validated model produced an AUC value of 0.82 and provided areas designated as highly likely to support ABBs. By limiting the model extent

to the Sandhills ecoregion and using threshold-dependent classifiers, the final habitat suitability model could be an important resource for wildlife managers engaged in the recovery of this habitat generalist. (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14772000.2014.892542#.VSQhgPmoq-1>).

The two documents that were created following the publication of this article are attached.

The American Burying Beetle (ABB) is listed as **Endangered** (State and Federal).

For more information: <http://rarespecies.nebraska.gov/portfolio/american-burying-beetle/>,  
<http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/wildlife/programs/legacy/pdfs/assessments/ABB.pdf>,  
<http://www.fws.gov/Midwest/endangered/insects/ambb/index.html>

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**THIS WEEKEND:** [Nebraska Prairie Chicken Festival](#), April 10-12, 2015, Calamus Outfitters, Burwell, Nebraska.

The Nebraska Prairie Chicken Festival aims to celebrate prairie grouse species, the grasslands they inhabit and the culture that surrounds them. Festival participants will have the opportunity to view the greater prairie chicken and sharp-tailed grouse in viewing blinds on the Switzer Ranch, which is the home of Calamus Outfitters. In addition, participants will enjoy extra birding excursions that highlight the diversity of species in the area, educational and inspiring speakers who will share their knowledge and passion, live entertainment, fabulous food and a fun, relaxed atmosphere focused on celebrating these awesome birds species, the grasslands they inhabit and the culture that surrounds them.



Can't make the festival? Lek tours are offered daily March 15-May 1.

(<http://www.nebraskaprairiechickens.com/>)

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[Webster County OKs key permit for wind farm](#). A wind farm proposed for development across Webster County's midsection came a big step closer to reality Tuesday with approval of a conditional use permit by the county Board of Commissioners.

(<http://www.hastingstribune.com/march/news0318windfarm.php>).

[Wind meeting gathers 100 plus](#). More than 100 people attended a meeting last week organized by landowners in the area of a proposed wind turbine project. A total of 33,000 acres is sought by NextEra Energy Resources, a company based in Florida. Two-thirds of the project would lie in Butler County, with the remaining one-third of Saunders County. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2017.

([http://www.wahoo-ashland-waverly.com/news/wind-meeting-gathers-plus/article\\_3fce808e-d888-11e4-91f5-ff83a8aaa306.html](http://www.wahoo-ashland-waverly.com/news/wind-meeting-gathers-plus/article_3fce808e-d888-11e4-91f5-ff83a8aaa306.html)).

[TRACKING THE SANDHILL CRANES' JOURNEY TO THE MIDWEST](#). The Crane Trust is partnering with researchers from Texas Tech University to deploy GPS tracking devices on four Lesser Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis canadensis*). The cranes were fitted with the tracking devices while at their winter grounds in northwest Texas near Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge.

([http://cranetrust.org/newsletter/tracking-the-sandhill-cranes-journey-to-the-midwest/?utm\\_source=Winter+2015+eNewsletter&utm\\_campaign=e-News+Winter+2015&utm\\_medium=email](http://cranetrust.org/newsletter/tracking-the-sandhill-cranes-journey-to-the-midwest/?utm_source=Winter+2015+eNewsletter&utm_campaign=e-News+Winter+2015&utm_medium=email)).

## Around the Nation & World...

### *Wind and Wildlife*

**[Bird Conservation Group Calls for Changes in Collection of Data at Wind Developments.](#)** American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has called on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to institute a new system of pre-construction risk assessment and bird and bat mortality data collection in connection with hundreds of thousands of bird (and bat) deaths being caused by wind turbines and the likelihood that that number could substantially exceed one million deaths when the industry reaches its full build out capacity by 2030 or before. (<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/150305.html>).

**[Fish And Wildlife Studies Impact Of Searsburg Wind Development On Black Bears.](#)** Hammond is Vermont's lead bear biologist and he heads up a team monitoring bear activity in the area on a project called the Deerfield Wind Black Bear Study. As a requirement of getting a permit to build a big wind farm, the Spanish company Iberdrola agreed to pay for a study looking at how bears are affected by ridge line development. Radio collars on several bears in the area track their movements, and the information they reveal may help determine site requirements for future wind projects in Vermont and beyond. (<http://digital.vpr.net/post/fish-and-wildlife-studies-impact-searsburg-wind-development-black-bears>).

**[Wind energy done right means a win-win for climate and wildlands.](#)** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is mapping the windiest public lands as it searches for the best places for wind energy development. When completed, this mapping tool will help inform where wind projects are likely to succeed, as well as identifying sensitive areas where development would have more conflicts and impacts. (<http://wilderness.org/blog/wind-energy-done-right-means-win-win-climate-and-wildlands>).

**[What Does It Take to Protect a Bat?](#)** Environmentalists are outraged that though 99 percent of Northern long-eared bats have died of white-nose syndrome in their core habitat, the federal government has listed the species as threatened rather than endangered. (<http://www.courthousenews.com/2015/04/06/what-does-it-take-to-protect-a-bat.htm>).

**[Shift in classification could be a death sentence for bats.](#)** Despite the bats' dire plight, however, the US Fish and Wildlife Service last week decided to step away from its own science-based proposal that called for protecting the northern long-eared bat by classifying it as "endangered." The decision to back off from that designation came under mounting political pressure from industry groups, a handful of state leaders, and conservatives in Congress who are committed to weakening the federal Endangered Species Act. (<http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/04/02/going-from-endangered-threatened-could-death-sentence-for-bats/N1zxmlxgrnhpH7g8xGfeFN/story.html>).

**[Wind energy industry has legacy of caring for wildlife.](#)** You see, we've battled for years in the wind industry to get to a place where any public discussion about protecting birds begins with the science to date showing that wind and solar are indeed the most wildlife friendly ways to produce electricity. Those who truly care about the fate of birds and wildlife know that climate change is by far their greatest threat, evidenced by several recent studies. (<http://www.evwind.es/2015/04/02/wind-energy-industry-has-legacy-of-caring-for-wildlife/51321>).

**[Study Proves How Little We Know About Wind Power and Eagle Mortality.](#)** A new study of eagle mortality at a wind facility near Palm Springs may well prove frustrating to both supporters of wind energy and those concerned about the technology's effect on wildlife. But if you look beneath the surface, the paper underscores a big problem with the issue of wind energy and wildlife: we just don't have the data we need to make smart decisions. (<http://www.kcet.org/news/define/rewire/commentary/study-proves-how-little-we-know-about-wind-and-eagles.html>).

**[Bird advocates seek to protect eagles from wind turbines.](#)** Bird advocates are asking a federal judge to stop the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from granting 30-year-long permits to wind energy companies to kill or harm eagles with wind turbines spinning at high speeds. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/07/usa-environment-eagles-idUSL2N0X40CL20150407>).

**[Iberdrola Renewables to give funds to wildlife protection groups](http://portlandtribune.com/pt/239-business/255091-125358-iberdrola-renewables-to-give-funds-to-wildlife-protection-groups)**. The wind power company's "Legacy of Caring" campaign provides grants to groups that provide avian rehabilitation, education and scientific understanding of birds of prey. (<http://portlandtribune.com/pt/239-business/255091-125358-iberdrola-renewables-to-give-funds-to-wildlife-protection-groups>).

**[Don't let clean energy projects stain national parks](http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/soapbox/article17127074.html)**. The Interior Department has made missteps in proposing and approving industrialized renewable energy development on some of California's most impressive desert landscapes, forever harming the same lands it is entrusted to protect. (<http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/soapbox/article17127074.html>).

### **Wildlife**

**[Sage-Grouse Inventory: 2014 Initiatives](http://westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/2014_WGA_Sage_Grouse_Inventory_Final_lo_res.pdf)**. Western Governors are committed to conservation of greater sage-grouse and assert that the breadth and depth of voluntary conservation efforts across the region, if allowed to run their course, will provide the bird with the necessary habitat to live and thrive. The success of voluntary conservation initiatives for sage-grouse provides compelling evidence that a listing of the bird as threatened or endangered under ESA is counterproductive and unnecessary. ([http://westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/2014\\_WGA\\_Sage\\_Grouse\\_Inventory\\_Final\\_lo\\_res.pdf](http://westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/2014_WGA_Sage_Grouse_Inventory_Final_lo_res.pdf)).

**[Inventory of State and Local Governments' Conservation Initiatives for Sage-Grouse](http://westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/2014_WGA_Sage_Grouse_Appendix_lo_res.pdf)**. 2014 Appendix. ([http://westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/2014\\_WGA\\_Sage\\_Grouse\\_Appendix\\_lo\\_res.pdf](http://westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/2014_WGA_Sage_Grouse_Appendix_lo_res.pdf)).

**[U.S. to halt expanded use of some insecticides amid honey bee decline](http://www.agweek.com/event/article/id/25494/)**. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said on Thursday it was unlikely to approve new or expanded uses of certain pesticides while it evaluates the risks they may pose to honey bees. (<http://www.agweek.com/event/article/id/25494/>).

### **Wind**

**[Senator Alexander: End Wind Subsidies To Fund Science](http://dailycaller.com/2015/03/25/senator-alexander-end-wind-subsidies-to-fund-science/)**. Sen. Lamar Alexander has a proposal for Democrats: End subsidies to wind power producers and use that money to double funding for federal energy research at the Department of Energy. (<http://dailycaller.com/2015/03/25/senator-alexander-end-wind-subsidies-to-fund-science/>).

**[The Texas Town That Just Quit Fossil Fuels](#)**. It wasn't altruistic. It's because coal's getting too pricey—and water's become too scarce. More and more, large entities in North America are deciding they no longer want to use fossil fuels like coal to generate electricity. They've decided the cost and the externalities—poor air quality, bad publicity, health issues—just aren't worth it.

### **Other**

**[Obama's Strategy on Climate Change, Part of Global Deal, Is Revealed](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/01/us/obama-to-offer-major-blueprint-on-climate-change.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=1)**. The White House on Tuesday introduced President Obama's blueprint for cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the United States by nearly a third over the next decade. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/01/us/obama-to-offer-major-blueprint-on-climate-change.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/01/us/obama-to-offer-major-blueprint-on-climate-change.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=1)).

**[Poll Finds Strong Majority Of Americans Support An International Climate Agreement](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/30/us-climate-agreement_n_6972434.html)**. A new poll finds an overwhelming majority of Americans support an international agreement to cut planet-warming emissions. The poll found 72 percent of likely 2016 voters said they support the United States signing on to an international agreement on climate change. ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/30/us-climate-agreement\\_n\\_6972434.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/30/us-climate-agreement_n_6972434.html)).

**Carbon Capture.** Has climate change made it harder for people to care about conservation? (<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/04/06/carbon-capture>).

### **Announcements**

**Service Protects Northern Long-eared Bat as Threatened Species under Endangered Species Act with Interim 4(d) Rule.** The listing becomes effective on May 4, 2015, 30 days after publication of the final listing determination in the Federal Register. (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/nlba/>).

**USFWS Approved Automated Acoustic Bat ID Software Programs.** Specified versions of the programs identified below are approved by the Service for use in 2015 and beyond for presence/probable absence surveys for Indiana bats (*Myotis sodalis*). These programs have been independently tested by USGS researchers and passed the Service's standardized test/validation process.

1. BCID Program (version 2.7b or newer)
2. EchoClass (version 3.0 or newer)
3. Kaleidoscope® Pro (version 2.2.2 or newer)

(<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/mammals/inba/surveys/inbaAcousticSoftware.html> ).

**Iberdrola Renewables Seeks Applicants for Wildlife Grants.** Iberdrola Renewables announced it is seeking applicants for its 2015 Wildlife Protection Program (WPP) grants. The company's ongoing "Legacy of Caring" campaign for wildlife and habitat awards WPP grants to avian rehabilitation groups. These partners play an important role in rehabilitation, community education and scientific understanding of birds of prey. ([http://www.yourrenewablenews.com/iberdrola+renewables+seeks+applicants+for+wildlife+grants\\_114363.html](http://www.yourrenewablenews.com/iberdrola+renewables+seeks+applicants+for+wildlife+grants_114363.html)).

### **Upcoming Conferences**

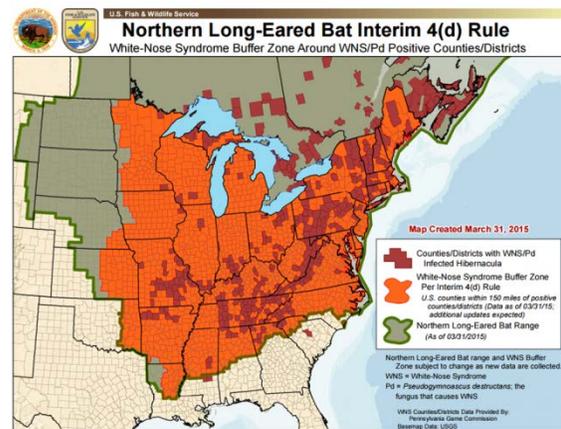
**AWEA Wind Power Conference & Exhibition.** May 18-21, 2015. Orlando, FL. (<http://www.windpowerexpo.org/>).

**The Effects of Noise on Aquatic Life.** The fourth International Conference on "The Effects of Noise on Aquatic Life" will take place in Dublin, Ireland, July 10-16, 2016. (<http://www.an2016.org/>).

### **Tools**

**Landsat on AWS.** The [Landsat](#) program is a joint effort of the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) and [NASA](#). First launched in 1972, the Landsat series of satellites has produced the longest, continuous record of Earth's land surface as seen from space. AWS has made Landsat 8 data freely available on Amazon S3 so that anyone can use our on-demand computing resources to perform analysis and create new products without needing to worry about the cost of storing Landsat data or the time required to download it. (<http://aws.amazon.com/public-data-sets/landsat/>).

**US Solar & Wind Associations Release Renewable Energy Handbook.** Two US renewable energy associations, the American Wind Energy Association and the Solar Energy Industries Association, have jointly published a handbook that details how states can incorporate renewable energy into their plans to



comply with US policy regulations. (<http://cleantechnica.com/2015/03/31/us-solar-wind-associations-release-renewable-energy-handbook/>).

**[WGA launches RAPID Toolkit to speed, streamline siting and permitting of transmission lines](#)**. Western Governors have rolled out the [RAPID Toolkit](#), an online tool that streamlines the challenge of siting and permitting transmission lines in the West. The online tool is the culmination of a multi-year effort by Western Governors to tackle the challenge of transmission line siting and permitting. (<http://westgov.org/news/298-news-2014/847-wga-launches-rapid-toolkit-to-speed-streamline-siting-and-permitting-of-transmission-lines>).

### **Webinars**

**[Webinar #3: Understanding Avian Collision Rate Modeling and Discussing what this Means in a Population Context at Land-Based and Offshore Windfarms](#)**. Wind farms can impact birds through collisions, barrier effects and displacement and habitat loss. Of these, collisions have attracted the most attention as the effects of direct mortality are considered to have the greatest potential to impact bird populations. (<http://tethys.pnnl.gov/events/webinar-3-understanding-avian-collision-rate-modeling-and-discussing-what-means-population>).

**[WINDEXchange Webinar: Overcoming Wind Siting Challenges: Overview and Wildlife](#)**. Siting issues are a complex and challenging aspect of turbine installations for developers. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) is finishing research on national siting considerations this spring, and other agencies and organizations have created tools designed to help support wind siting decisions. ([http://apps2.eere.energy.gov/wind/windexchange/filter\\_detail.asp?itemid=4739](http://apps2.eere.energy.gov/wind/windexchange/filter_detail.asp?itemid=4739)).

### **Nebraska Legislative Bills** (updates in red)

**[LB117](#)** - *Change provisions relating to energy financing contracts*. Introduced by Haar on January 9, 2015; Referred to Revenue Committee on January 12, 2015; Notice of Hearing for March 4, 2015; Statement of Intent and Fiscal Note. A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to energy; to amend sections 66-1062, 66-1064, 66-1065, and 66-1066, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to redefine terms; to change provisions relating to energy financing contracts between energy service companies and governmental units; to harmonize provisions; and to repeal the original sections. ([http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view\\_bill.php?DocumentID=24434](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=24434)).

**[LB407](#)** - *Change and eliminate provisions relating to certified renewable export facilities as prescribed*. Introduced by Haar on January 16, 2015; Referred to Natural Resources Committee on January 20, 2015; Notice of Hearing for March 4, 2015; Statement of Intent and Fiscal Note; Haar priority bill (March 11, 2015). A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to public power; to amend sections 70-1001.01 and 70-1014.02, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2014; to eliminate provisions relating to criteria for approval of certain facilities as prescribed; to harmonize provisions; to repeal the original sections; and to outright repeal section 70-1028, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2014. ([http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view\\_bill.php?DocumentID=24692](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=24692)).

**[LB412](#)** - *Change provisions relating to the Rural Community-Based Energy Development Act*. Introduced by Mello on January 16, 2015; Referred to Natural Resources Committee on January 20, 2015; Notice of Hearing for February 20, 2015; Statement of Intent, Committee Statement, and Fiscal Note; Placed on General File on March 4, 2015. A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to Rural Community-Based Energy Development Act; to amend sections 70-1907, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and 70-1903, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2014; to redefine a term; to change requirements for project developers; and to repeal the original sections. ([http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view\\_bill.php?DocumentID=24483](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=24483)).

**LB423** - *Change a renewable energy tax credit.* Introduced by Nordquist on January 16, 2015; Referred to Revenue Committee on January 20, 2015; Notice of Hearing for February 25, 2015; Statement of Intent and Fiscal Note; Nordquist priority bill (March 12, 2015); **Placed on General File and Revenue filed AM1103 (pending) on April 2, 2015.** A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to revenue and taxation; to amend section 77-27,235, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2014; to change a renewable energy tax credit; and to repeal the original section.  
([http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view\\_bill.php?DocumentID=24475](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=24475)).

**LB583** – *Require a state energy plan.* Introduced by Schilz on January 21, 2015; Referred to Natural Resources Committee on January 23, 2015; Notice of Hearing for February 11, 2015; Statement of Intent and Fiscal Note. A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the State Energy Office; to require a state energy plan; and to provide powers and duties.  
([http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view\\_bill.php?DocumentID=25072](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=25072)).

**The Wildlife Society Renewable Energy Working Group – LinkedIn.** Connect with other resource professionals involved in renewable energy – wildlife work. To join, go to:  
[http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4433729&trk=my\\_groups-b-grp-v](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4433729&trk=my_groups-b-grp-v), click Join.

Check out the **Nebraska Wind Energy and Wildlife Project website** at:  
<http://snr.unl.edu/renewableenergy/wind/> and **Wind Energy and Wildlife news** at:  
<http://www.scoop.it/t/wind-energy-and-wildlife>.

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