

FRIDAY

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The Modesto Bee

Altamont Windmills Illegally Kill Birds

Your story on windmills ("Administration tilts at more windmills," Sept. 12, Page B-2) wrongly implied that bird kills at Altamont Pass wind turbines are less of a problem than at other wind farms. The crux of the issue at Altamont is not just about killing birds, but turbines killing birds of prey -- especially rare species such as golden eagles and burrowing owls. Raptor mortality is greater at Altamont than at any other wind farm in the world. The California Energy Commission published a comprehensive study, "Developing Methods to Reduce Bird Mortality in the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area." Based on five-year surveys, the study concluded that turbines there kill 1,766 to 4,721 birds each year, of which 881 to 1,300 are raptors.

The Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit against the largest wind-power companies because killing these birds is illegal under state and federal wildlife laws and is a level of carnage and ecological impact unparalleled by any other wind farm in North America.

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